

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4642

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STADIS - LIMDIS //////////////////////////////////////

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, GB

SUBJ: U. S. RELATIONS WITH GABON

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWSOM FROM AMBASSADOR

1. WHILE I KNOW YOU ARE WELL AWARE VARIOUS GABONESE PROBLEMS, BELIEVE IT INCUMBENT ON ME TO HIGHLIGHT FOR YOU RECORD OF PAST TWO AND HALF YEARS AND CRITICAL PHASE WE ARE ABOUT TO ENTER.

2. BONGO HAS RAISED SIX ISSUES OF REAL IMPORTANCE TO HIM OVER PAST TWO YEARS AND WE HAVE SO FAR NOT BEEN ABLE TO GIVE HIM SATISFACTION ON ANY:

- A. GIFT OF EQUIPMENT FOR PRESIDENT' S PERSONAL GUARD.
- B. GIFT OF PATROL BOAT.
- C. MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR PEACE CORPS SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAM.
- D. LIMITATION ON MANGANESE STOCK PILE SALES TO CURRENT RATE.
- E. AID SUPPORT FOR TRANSGABON RAILROAD.
- F. BONGO VISIT.

3. FIRST TWO ARE OBVIOUSLY NOT POSSIBLE AND I HAVE SO INFORMED BONGO WHO WAS CLEARLY DISAPPOINTED. SEEMS MOST UNLIKELY THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO GIVE GABONESE SATISFACTION ON POINTS C AND D AND I WILL
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HAVE TO EXPLAIN THIS TO BONGO AT END OF MAY WHEN HE RETURNS FROM OAU. AS ISSUES IMPORTANT TO GABONESE, OUR RATIONALES WILL GO DOWN HARD. LAST TWO POINTS ARE STILL TO BE DECIDED, BUT TIME FOR DECISION IS RUNNING SHORT.

4. FROM BONGO'S POINT OF VIEW, HE HAS, DURING PAST TWO AND HALF YEARS:

A. PUBLICLY PROCLAIMED GOOD RELATIONS WITH U. S., PROHIBITED ALL CRITICISM OF U. S. (INCLUDING ON SUBJECT OF VIETNAM) IN GABONESE INFO MEDIA, DECLARED ALL PAST MISUNDERSTANDINGS OVER, AND PUBLICLY REVERSED HIS OWN PREVIOUS STAND ON PEACE CORPS.

B. CREATED FAVORABLE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CLIMATE FOR US. BUSINESS WHICH HAS RESULTED IN GRANTING CHOICE OIL CONCESSIONS TO U. S. FIRMS AND A RECENT INCREASE IN U. S. EXPORTS, WHICH IN TURN HAS LED TO A FAVORABLE U. S. BALANCE OF PAYMENTS WITH GABON.

C. SUPPORTED U. S. IN KEY UN VOTES IN WHICH WE ASKED FOR SUPPORT (E. G. CHICOM AND US/ UN ASSESSMENT).

D. ASSISTED US IN OUR RELATIONS WITH GABON'S NEIGHBORS.

5. ON OUR SIDE, WE HAVE (ASIDE FROM PRESENTING RENOVATED PAO RESIDENCE AS NEW CULTURAL CENTER) PROVIDED SOME SELF- HELP AID, EXIM CREDITS AND CONDITIONAL OFFER OF PC VOLUNTEERS (WITHOUT MATERIAL SUPPORT).

THESE HAVE BEEN POSITIVE STEPS ON OUR PART, BUT CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY GERMANS AND CANADIANS (TO SAY NOTHING OF FRENCH) AND CERTAINLY LESS THAN EXPECTED HERE.

6. DECISION ON RAILROAD WILL HAVE TO BE MADE BY AID BY END OF MONTH AND DECISION ON VISIT FOR 1973 OBVIOUSLY ANXIOUSLY AWAITED HERE. IF ANSWERS ON THESE ARE NEGATIVE WE CAN EXPECT THAT BONGO WILL FEEL BITTERLY LET DOWN ON BASIS OF RECORD SUMMARIZED ABOVE. OUR GOOD RELATIONS WILL INEVITABLY SUFFER. ALONG WITH BILATERAL POLITICAL STRAINS, WE ARE LIKELY TO ENCOUNTER INCREASINGLY COOL WELCOME TO U. S. BUSINESS ACTIVITY AND DECLINING GABONESE SUPPORT INTERNATIONALLY.

7. I WELL UNDERSTAND THE MANY REASONS WHY WE HAVE
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BEEN UNABLE TO RESPOND MORE AFFIRMATIVELY TO GABONESE REQUESTS, SOME OF WHICH I HAVE NOT PERSONALLY SUPPORTED. IT WOULD SEEM UNFORTUNATE HOWEVER IF FAVORABLE RAPPORT ESTABLISHED IN LAST FEW YEARS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DISSIPATE IN THIS STABLE, PRO-WEST, PRO FREE- ENTERPRISE COUNTRY WHERE WE HAVE SUCH REAL U. S. INTERESTS (US STEEL, BETHLEHEM, GULF,

TEXACO, ETC.), REAL POTENTIAL FOR INCREASED U. S.
EXPORTS, AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT.

8. DO NO WISH TO SOUND ALARMIST, BUT HOPE THAT
DECISIONS ON AID CONTRIBUTION TO RAILROAD, AND
ON VISIT WILL BE TAKEN IN PERSPECTIVE THIS OVER- ALL
PICTURE.
MCKESSON

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